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SHOUTS & MURMURS

WHO AM I?

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Who am I? That is a simple question, yet it is one without a simple answer. I am many things—and I am one thing. But I am not a thing that is just lying around somewhere, like a pen, or a toaster, or a housewife. That is for sure. I am much more than that. I am a living, breathing thing, a thing that can draw with a pen and toast with a toaster and chat with a housewife, who is sitting on a couch eating toast. And still, I am much more.

I am a man.

And I am a former baby and a future skeleton, and I am a distant future pile of dust. I am also a Gemini, who is on the cusp.

I am “brother” and I am “son” and I am “father” (but just according to one person, who does not have any proof but still won’t seem to let it go). Either way, I am moving very soon and not letting her know about it. I am asking you to keep that between us.

I am trustworthy and loyal, but at the same time I am no Boy Scout. No, I am certainly not. I am quite the opposite, in fact. And by opposite I do not mean Girl Scout. No. I mean Man Scout. And by that I do not mean Scout Leader. In fact, I am not affiliated with the Scouts at all. Let’s just forget about the Scouts and Scouting altogether, O.K.?

I am concepts and thoughts and feelings and outfits. And I am each of these all at once, unless I am in the shower. Then I am not outfits, because that would be uncomfortable.

To some I am known as Chief. And these are usually people who work in Radio Shack or try to sell me shoes. To others I am known as Buddy. These are people who dwell in bars and wonder if I’ve got a problem or what it is that I am “looking at.” And to still others, who are in that same bar, standing just off to the side, I am “Get Him!”

I am he and I am him. I am this and I am that. And I am, from time to time, Roberta, if I am in a chat room.

People have known me by many titles. In high school, I was Student and Key Club Vice-President and Queer Bait. In college, I was Pledge and then Disappointed and then Transfer Student. I am still amazed at how picky certain so-called “brotherly” organizations can be. And I am actually glad that they didn’t choose me for their stupid fraternity.

To some I am fantasy, and to others I am Frank, mostly because I have told them that this is my name—even though it is not even close to my name. I am a mystery wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a pita. Why the pita? That counts as another mystery.

I am everything and I am nothing. I am just kidding; I am not everything and nothing. That would be ridiculous. I am just everything.

I am what I eat. And I am this especially when I bite my nails.

I have been called Hey, You! and Get Out of the Way! and Look Out! And then, some time later, Plaintiff.

I am my own worst critic. I am going to give you an example. "That's not me enough" is the kind of thing I am prone to say about myself. See what I mean? I am sure you do.

I am the silent majority.

I am a loud minority.

I am not talking about Puerto Ricans when I say that, because I am not a racist. I am just clearing that up. In fact, I am pretty sure I have at least one friend from each of the races (Hi, Guillermo).

I am friend. I am foe. I am fo' sho'. What up, y'all?

I am sorry about that. I was just talking to one of my race friends, a black one. I am white and I am black. And I am both of these when I am dressed as a mime. And then I am sh-h-h.

I am Batman, but only on Halloween. And then I am not invited to many parties. But I am fine with that, because that just makes me an even more accurate Batman (because Batman does not go to parties as Batman but only as Bruce Wayne). I am right about this.

I am someone who likes to go to the park. But I am not the guy with the Labrador retriever and the tennis ball and the tattered book under his arm, who is wearing fleece and is kind of tan. No. I am not that guy. I am sick of that guy and all the women who talk to him.

I am the Walrus, but not the one you're probably thinking of. I am the Other Walrus, the one who is less the Walrus in the sense of legendary music and more the Walrus in the sense of his tendency to lie around on a beach for too long.

I am bravery. I am courage. I am valor. I am daring. I am holding a thesaurus.

I am the sun. I am the moon. I am the rain, I am the earth. I am these when I am taking mushrooms with Kevin. I am good friends with Kevin. I am not sure what Kevin's last name is.

I am sometimes referred to as Excuse Me in an annoyed tone of voice, because apparently I am in the way. I am so sorry. I am supposed to be some sort of mind reader, I guess. I am moving out of the way now as slowly as I possibly can. I am doing this and there's nothing you can do about it.

I am often the one they call You but I am no more You than you. I am me. And I am more Me than you are or can ever be. And one time I was Corey for almost five minutes while I was talking with a stranger, until she realized that I was not her friend Corey.

I am neither here nor there, but there—a little to the left. Yeah. That's me.

I am waving at you. I am waving right at you now.

I am looking right at you.

I am sensing that you don't know me. I am starting to feel awkward.

I am getting out of here. ♦

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